
OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ELEMENT

PRIMARY GOAL

Conserve, enhance and restore all open space and sensitive resource areas in the Rancho Peñasquitos community. Retain viable connected systems of open space, maintain all open space containing biologically sensitive habitat in its natural state and prohibit encroachment and impacts of adjacent development on areas designated open space.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The undeveloped natural areas of the Rancho Peñasquitos community have important biological value. Many of the remaining natural areas are designated open space and are either publicly owned or private, open space easements. The majority of the undeveloped areas contain grasslands, chaparral and coastal sage scrub habitat. Coastal sage scrub is particularly sensitive because it serves as habitat for several highly threatened animals including the California gnatcatcher, cactus wren, San Diego horned lizard and orange-throated whiptail.

Figure 33 shows the major recommended open space system for the planning area. The figure indicates general areas for dedication or public acquisition of open space as residential development proceeds but does not illustrate a number of areas which may be preserved as internal open space by open space easements or non-building areas. Major easements and public rights-of-ways which are expected to remain as open space are also shown.

In the Peñasquitos Canyon area south of proposed SR-56, substantial open space fingers should continue to be preserved, including an open space corridor adjacent to Camino del Sur. This Plan restricts residential development to particular portions of the north canyon wall, while no residences are permitted in the canyon bottom. Some open spaces in the Ridgewood, Parkview, and Peñasquitos Creek neighborhoods are recommended to be included in the park and open space network of the Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. The open space areas within the planning area south of proposed SR-56 and west of the 130-foot water easement total about 450 acres, including utility easements and the park sites, and excluding internal open space easements, school sites and roads.

The Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) serves to protect and preserve the environmentally sensitive lands of San Diego, including wetlands, wetland buffers, floodplains, hillsides, biologically sensitive lands and significant prehistoric and historic resources as defined in the ordinance. Future development proposals in the Rancho Peñasquitos community on property with sensitive resources will be required to obtain a RPO Permit.

Resource-Based Parks

The 240-acre existing Black Mountain Park is located on the slopes of Black Mountain, in the extreme northern portion of the Rancho Peñasquitos community, approximately two miles west of I-15. The park is a relatively undisturbed natural area which provides an

important wildlife habitat. Black Mountain Park is also important for its visual qualities. The southwest exposure of Black Mountain can be seen from more than 30 miles away on a clear day. Views from the park are spectacular in every direction, with clear days providing views of distant mountain ranges and the San Clemente and Catalina Islands. Black Mountain Mine, located on the north slope of the mountain, was mined for arsenopyrite in the 1920s and is recommended to be developed as an interpretive center.

An additional 240 acres is desired to create an expanded 480-acre park. The General Plan and this Plan recommend two areas of open space acquisition through public and private means in the vicinity of the existing 240-acre Black Mountain Park. The first area represents a 240-acre expansion to the current park, which includes the peak of Black Mountain. The second area is a proposed open space corridor running from Black Mountain Park to the coast via McGonigle Canyon and Carmel Valley. The portion of this corridor within the Peñasquitos community is partly in the Sunset Hills neighborhood and partly in the Bluffs Neighborhood.

The Draft Black Mountain Park Master Plan (November 1987), provides guidance for the present and future development of Black Mountain Park.

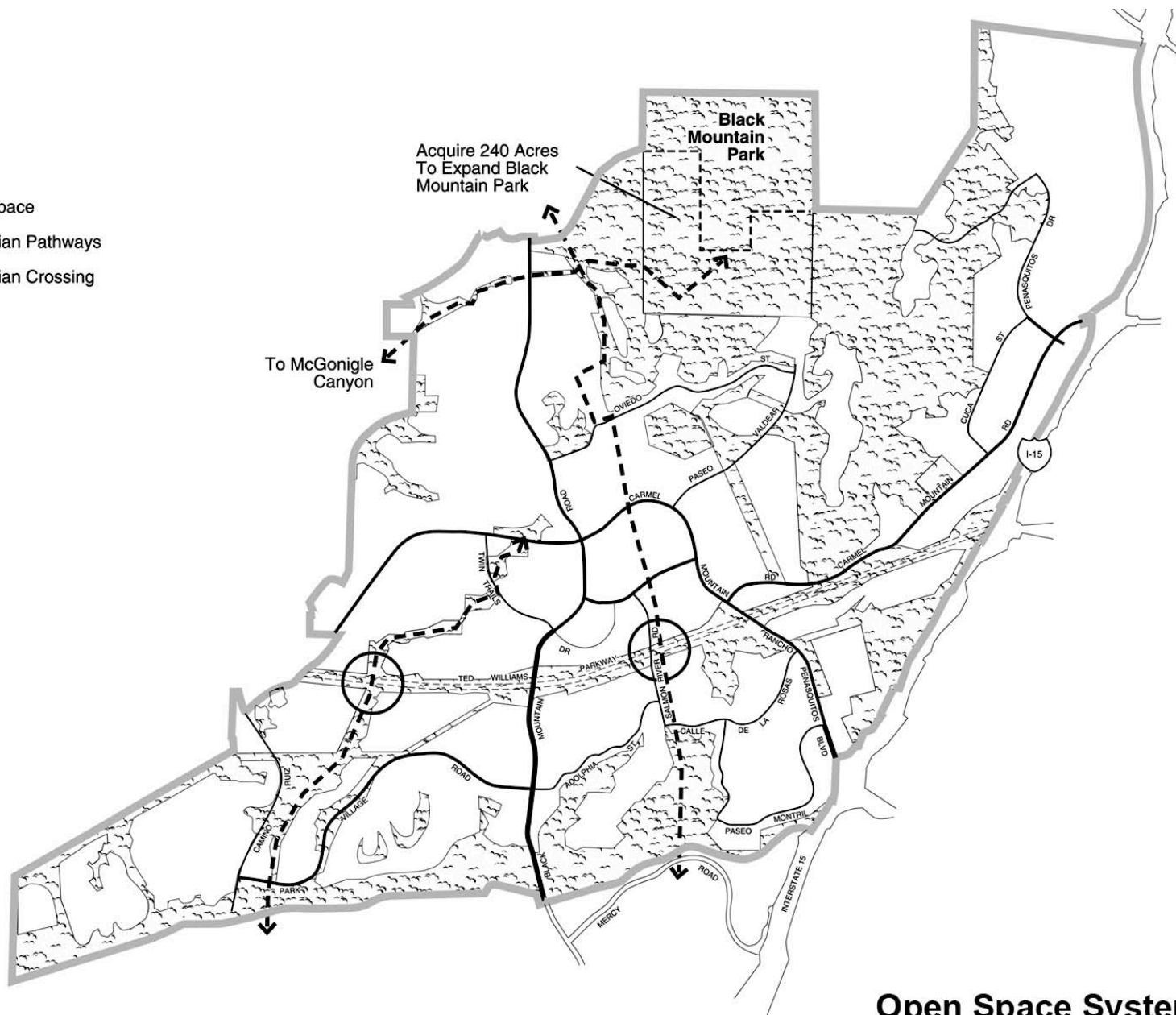
Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve

Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve is located immediately south of the Rancho Peñasquitos community boundary. It is approximately six miles in length, and generally runs east-west between I-15 and I-5. The preserve consists of two large coastal canyons and currently includes over 3,300 acres of publicly-owned property. Both Peñasquitos Canyon and its tributary, Lopez Canyon, are characterized by perennial streams and steep slopes rising from flat, densely vegetated canyon bottoms.

Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve contains significant natural and biological resources including many rare plant and animal species and a boulder-studded waterfall. The preserve also contains significant cultural and archaeological resources such as the Ruiz-Alvarado Adobe (1825), the Johnson-Taylor Adobe (1860), remains of the prehistoric La Jolla Indian culture and the more recent Northern Diegueno Indian culture. Significant paleontological (fossil) resources occur in the underlying geologic formations found in the Peñasquitos Canyon area and in the underlying Mission Valley Formation throughout the Plan area. The preserve also contains significant recreational opportunities and represents an important open space system in the North City area.

Land use concepts and development in and around the Canyon Preserve are identified in the Master Plan, Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, (February 1986). The plan proposes to preserve and enhance the canyon's natural and cultural resources, while allowing for recreational and educational uses by the public. Proposed uses include interpretive complexes, ranger residences, improvement and expansion of hiking and equestrian trails, camping and parking/staging areas.

-  Open Space
-  Pedestrian Pathways
-  Pedestrian Crossing



Open Space System
Rancho Peñasquitos Community Plan

33
 FIGURE

Pedestrian Pathways and Bikeways

Three major pedestrian pathways are recommended for the Rancho Peñasquitos community. The first runs between Black Mountain Peak and Peñasquitos Canyon, via the Town Center area. Most of this path runs along a portion of the 130-foot water aqueduct easement of the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA). The second major pathway connects the existing open space system for the Twin Trails neighborhood to Peñasquitos Canyon via the Camino del Sur open space corridor. Special consideration should be given to preserving this pathway as it passes through the area south of proposed SR-56. Both pathways require crossings at proposed SR-56. The third major pathway is shown connecting Black Mountain Park and McGonigle Canyon, through the open space corridor.

The construction of a Class I bicycle path is recommended for inclusion along the SDCWA easement parallel to the proposed major pedestrian pathway. This Class I bicycle path segment is part of a proposed regional bicycle path along this easement between Scripps Ranch and Lake Hodges. The bicycle path will provide non-motorized access within the Rancho Peñasquitos and the proposed San Dieguito Regional River Valley Park to the north.

Other informal pathways are expected to be generated through use within open space areas. A number of these paths already exist. Usually, the informal pathways should not require extensive improvements or special maintenance. Special care should be taken in laying out development in the Black Mountain neighborhood, such that an informal path may be developed connecting open spaces from Carmel Mountain Road and Peñasquitos Village Neighborhood Park to Black Mountain Peak. This informal path should use road viewpoints to provide safe access across streets. The pedestrian pathways should be dedicated by the developer during the tentative map process. Any maintenance required by these pathways will be the responsibility of the Landscape Maintenance District. If this district is not created, other sources of funds for maintenance will be required.

A Plan for Equestrian Trails and Facilities (February 1975), presents a program for the development of equestrian trails in the City of San Diego. The plan describes two equestrian trails that traverse the Black Mountain Park area. The Black Mountain trail connects Lake Hodges with Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, and the Carmel Valley Trail connects the peak of Black Mountain with the western end of Los Peñasquitos Canyon. Other equestrian trails throughout the City and parts of the county are also discussed in this plan.

ISSUES

The impact of development on Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Black Mountain Park, and adjacent biological resources is an extremely important issue in the Rancho Peñasquitos community. Care must be taken to ensure that the interface between existing and proposed developments and these natural areas remain non-intrusive. The use of native plant species should be strongly encouraged.

Wildlife corridors must remain wide enough to provide adequate crossing under or over roadways and must provide adequate protection from excessive noise, night lighting and predation by domestic animals.

The commercial site at the corner of Camino del Sur and Carmel Mountain Road in the Parkview Neighborhood is adjacent to a vernal pool preserve owned by the state of California Department of Transportation. Development on the site must provide an adequate buffer between the site and the preserve and all runoff should be directed away from the watershed of vernal pools. In addition, the site adjacent to the preserve should be fenced to provide further protection from potential impacts.

The use of off-road vehicles in open space areas should be prohibited. Where feasible, appropriate design layouts, fencing, signing and landscaping should be employed at open space access points and in open space areas where preservation of particular natural features is desired in order to discourage the use of off-road motor vehicles.

POLICIES

- The proposed expansion area (240 acres) of Black Mountain Park should be acquired by the City, the state or another public agency. The underlying land use designation for this expansion area is regional open space park.
- Open space areas should provide a continuous, connected open space system maximizing the use of open spaces as wildlife habitat.
- Open space with reduced long-term biological value (due to proximity of development) should be used for moderate impact activities such as jogging, horseback riding, pet walking and interpretive trail hiking.
- Open space serving as wildlife habitat should be maintained in its natural state.
- Vernal pools and their associated native landforms and contributing watersheds should not be disturbed.
- Exotic or invasive plant species should not be planted adjacent to natural open space areas.
- Development occurring adjacent to Peñasquitos Canyon and Black Mountain Park should follow the criteria outlined below:
 - The filling of lateral canyons and grading over canyon rims should be minimized except in those few areas not visible from the canyon floor. Promontories and canyon rims that are visible from the canyon floor or Black Mountain peak may be developed when suitable landscape screening is provided after thorough design review. This review process can be accomplished by application of the HR Overlay Zone to slopes of 25 percent or greater and use of the PRD procedure. Both of these methods will result in substantial slope areas being placed in open space easements or dedicated to the City when adjacent to regionally significant park or open space areas.
 - Public access to canyon rims and views should be provided at suitable locations in the form of paths, scenic overlooks and streets.

- Grading on ridges should be kept to a minimum. Where grading is feasible, sculptured grading techniques should be used to blend slopes with natural land contours. Graded areas should be built upon or planted rapidly in accordance with the City's land development ordinance. These measures should preclude the erosion of exposed slopes and subsequent erosion and siltation of natural drainage systems.
- Any recontoured slopes should be stabilized with appropriate plant materials to help reestablish the natural biotic systems.
- Development should be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade environmentally sensitive habitat areas.
- Only low-profile dwellings should be allowed near the canyon rims. Such dwellings should be sensitively designed to fit with the hillsides and not be visually prominent from the canyon floor or Black Mountain Park.
- Design of dwelling units should stress a blending of architecture with the natural terrain. Architectural shapes, bulk, color materials and landscaping should be carefully chosen and respect the physical constraints of the land.
- Use of the Planned Development procedures is recommended to minimize grading and to preserve the natural environment.
- Development of land underlain by the Ardath Shale or similar formations (which are often unstable and not suitable for building sites) should be avoided, unless specific engineering studies indicate that potential problems can be mitigated.
- Appropriate mitigation measures should be applied to archaeological sites found in the area. Where development would adversely impact archaeological or paleontological resources, reasonable mitigation measures will be required. When significant archaeological resources are encountered, avoidance or preservation of the resource would be the preferred form of mitigation. This proposal can be implemented by requiring thorough archaeological surveys prior to the approval of rezonings and subdivision maps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Include the land acquisition of the remaining 240 acres of Black Mountain Park in the City's CIP.
- Any development on the commercial site at the corner of Camino del Sur and Carmel Mountain Road should be fenced along the portion adjacent to the vernal pool preserve to decrease impacts to the vernal pools and watershed.
- Coordinate with the SDCWA to provide a pedestrian pathway and a Class I bicycle path along its utility easement. Require dedication of land along the paths during development of contiguous property.

- Require that long- and short-term maintenance responsibilities on open space areas be clearly defined as a part of development approvals.
- Require applicants to set aside wildlife crossing areas through the Black Mountain neighborhood, connecting all remaining natural habitat to Black Mountain Park as development is approved.
- Develop pathways or bike trails through the Black Mountain neighborhood for public access to Black Mountain Park.
- Encourage the use of open space with reduced long-term biological value by:
 - Providing well-marked and convenient access points with signage which clearly indicates that these open space areas are intended to be used by people with pets, for mountain biking, hiking, jogging and horseback riding, while other open spaces in the community are not available for such uses.
 - Developing interpretive and environmental outreach programs in these areas.
 - Educating new residents through homeowners' brochures.
- Encourage retention of wildlife habitat value in connected open space systems by:
 - Providing signs which indicate these areas are for pedestrian use only and that pets are not permitted.
 - Providing signs at limited access points which direct moderate impact users to the appropriate areas in the community.
 - Providing visual access, where possible, by overlooks.
 - Educating new residents through homeowners' brochures.